



The President's Daily Brief

June 23, 1976

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June 23, 1976

Table of Contents

Lebanon: Christian militias yesterday staged new attacks in Beirut and elsewhere, but there was little fighting between Syrian and Palestinian units in the Beirut area. The various factions have shown some interest in a proposal for roundtable talks in Paris. (Page 1)

Italy: Italy's major parties will begin meetings in t125X1ext f'25X1 days to assess the election results. (Page 2)

South Africa - Rhodesia: [REDACTED]

(Page 3)

25X1

Notes: USSR; Argentina; Romania (Pages 5 and 6)

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LEBANON: *Lebanese Christian militias yesterday mounted new attacks on Palestine refugee camps and some Muslim areas in Beirut. They also may have been responsible for new outbreaks of fighting near several coastal towns in central Lebanon.*

The Christian forces involved have enjoyed a partial respite during the recent confrontation between the Syrians and the Palestinians and probably have used the time to import substantial quantities of new arms. The Christians--possibly with private Syrian encouragement--may be attempting to demonstrate that a large Syrian force must remain to keep peace in the Beirut area.

Whatever the case, the Christians are trying to push the Palestinians out of some disputed areas in Beirut and to regain territory lost earlier in the northern and central areas. They recognize that this may be their best opportunity as Palestinian and leftist forces have been significantly weakened by their encounters with the Syrian army.

There was almost no fighting yesterday between Syrian and Palestinian forces in the Beirut area as the two sides moved to complete implementation of the first stage of their cease-fire agreement.

Syrian and Saiqa troops in the airport and the Khaldah area have been replaced by the Syrian-Libyan contingent of the Arab Security Force. The Libyan troops reportedly are outside the airport, however, and the airport proper remains under the control of Syrian regulars.

The Christians had threatened to resume shelling the airport if Syria relaxed its control.

Damascus apparently took advantage of the Arab Security Force's movement into Lebanon to replace its exhausted unit in the Khaldah area. Although the new group of Syrians theoretically is responsible to

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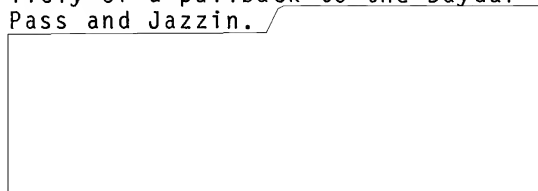
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the Arab League rather than to Damascus, the distinction so far means nothing and leaves Syria's presence undiluted.

Palestinian and Syrian spokesmen appear far apart on the distance Syrian forces are to pull back from Beirut.

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The Palestinians say the Syrians must withdraw to the Bekaa Valley, while the Syrians are talking publicly of a pullback to the Baydar Pass and Jazzin.



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Although the latest fighting may delay further any progress toward a political solution, leaders of the various factions have shown some interest in the recent French proposal for roundtable talks in Paris.



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ITALY: *Italy's major parties will begin meetings in the next few days to assess the election results.*

Debate is likely to be most intense in the Socialist Party, which precipitated the election but failed to win any new parliamentary seats. Paradoxically, the Socialists are now more important than ever to Christian Democratic attempts to govern without the Communists because losses sustained by small centrist parties reduce their value as viable coalition partners.

The Socialists, disappointed that their pivotal position is accidental rather than a result of electoral gains, are likely to undergo

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a full scale strategy review that could eventually lead to a challenge to party leader De Martino.

The major question for the Socialists is whether, or how, to modify their condition that the Communists be associated in some way with any government the Socialists agree to form with the Christian Democrats. If the Socialists stick to their insistence on some Communist involvement, the Christian Democrats will have trouble formulating a unified response.

Communist chief Berlinguer appeared to interpret the outcome as an affirmation of his "historic compromise" strategy.

He asserted that the strong showing by both the Christian Democrats and Communists means that the two parties can not avoid dealing with each other. At the same time, Berlinguer reiterated that his party is in "no hurry" to join the government. The sharp Communist advance, however, may bring Berlinguer under increased pressure from party militants to translate the party's gains into tangible results.

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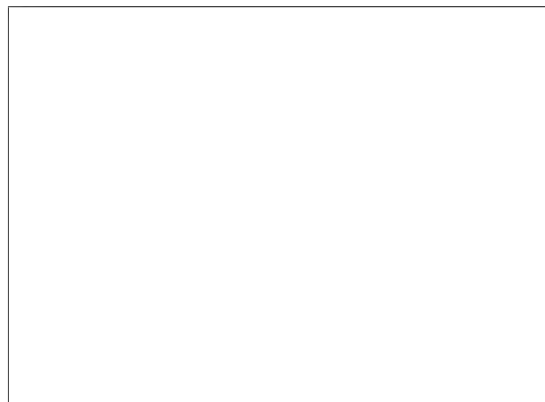
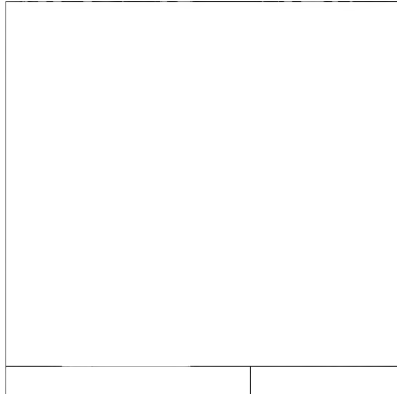
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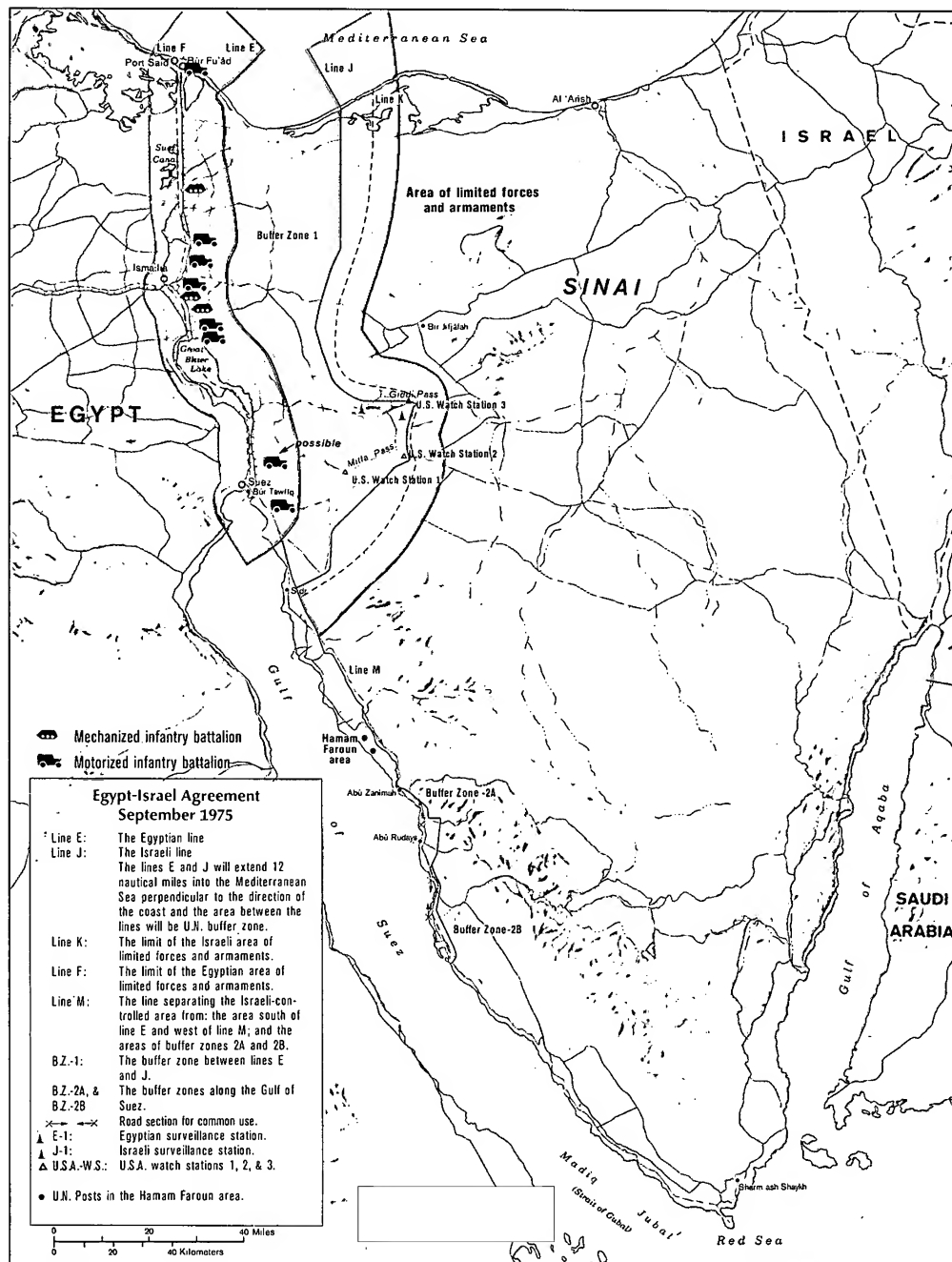
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SOUTH AFRICA - RHODESIA:



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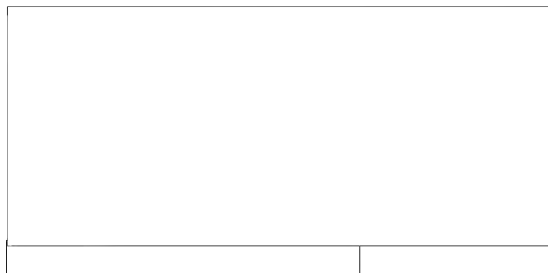
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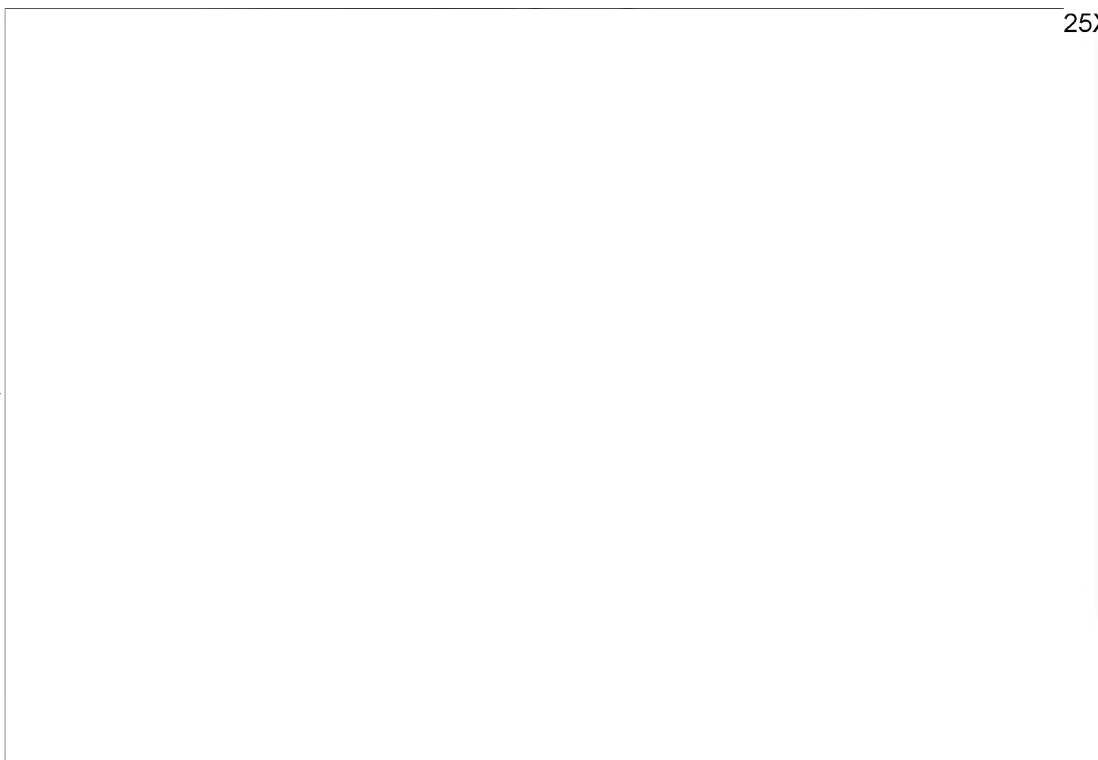
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NOTES

Salyut 5, apparently a military version of the Soviet Salyut space station, was launched yesterday from the Tyuratam missile test center.

Initial reports indicate that the 19-ton vehicle reached orbit and is functioning properly. The launch of a Soyuz spacecraft probably will follow within two weeks to carry cosmonauts to the space station.

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Argentina

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Several reports assert that a Chilean leftist leader arrested in Argentina was subsequently turned over to the Chileans and is now dead. The Brazilian press, meanwhile, alleges that the Argentine government has handed over to Chilean authorities a Brazilian political exile wanted by Santiago.

Despite disclaimers by Argentine leaders, US embassy officials in Buenos Aires now suspect the acquiescence, and perhaps the direct involvement, of the Argentine security forces in many of these incidents.

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Romanian President

Ceausescu recently instructed the press not to raise controversial questions on the "history of Soviet-Romanian relations,"

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Ceausescu apparently intends to tone down his regime's polemics with the Soviets over "falsifications" of Romanian history. In a speech on June 2, he flatly said that Romania has no territorial or other problems with the USSR. Ceausescu, however, has given no indication that Romania will waver from its national communist course.

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